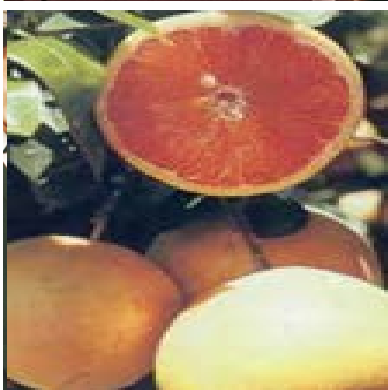


# TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

# SOUTH REGION

## IMPACTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS



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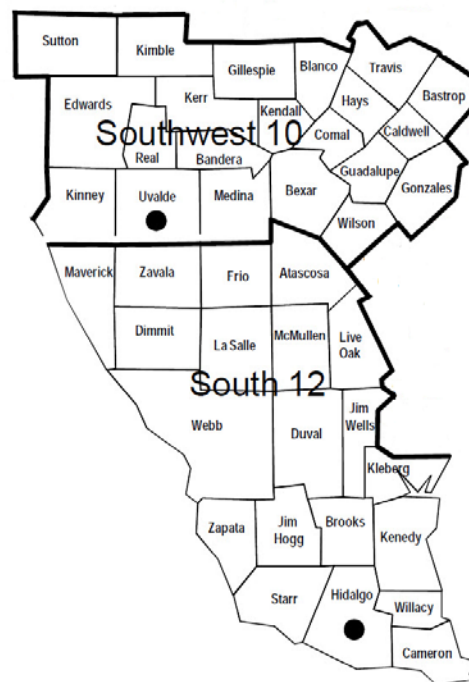
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Healthy South Texas

## South Region Overview

The South Region consists of Districts 10 and 12 which are the southwest and southern districts in Texas for A&M AgriLife Extension. The South Region demographics include a total population of 5,669,802 with 59.89% Hispanics, 32.26% white, 5.31% African American, 1.16% Native American and 2.06% other. In addition, the South Region is comprised of 41 counties and supported by 2 District headquarters at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center in Uvalde (D10) and at Weslaco (D12). Also, the South Region has two urban counties who are designated a County Extension Director who oversee faculty and staff in Bexar and Travis County. Approximately, 127 County Agents, Specialty Agents and 50 program assistants work to provide program support and educational capacity in the South Region.



## Educational Contacts

- Total Contacts - 1,792,364
- Educational Event Contacts – 669,415
- Educational Session Contact Hours – 927,322
- Other Contacts – 1,122,949
- Social Media: Posts – 131,093; Followers – 850,885

## Volunteer Engagement

- Volunteers Involved – 16,500
- Volunteer Hours Contributed – 60,741
- Value of Volunteer Time - \$1,652,155.20 (@ \$27.20/hr.)
- Total Volunteer Contacts – 118,574

## Regional Team

- Todd Swift – Regional Program Leader - ANR and 4-H Youth Development
- Jana Osbourn – Regional Program Leader- FCH and 4-H Youth Development
- Michael Haynes – District Extension Administrator – District 10
- Dr. Ruben Saldana – District Extension Administrator – District 12
- Nelda Speller – County Extension Director – Bexar County
- Madelena Johnson – County Extension Director – Travis County

# Agriculture & Natural Resources

AgriLife Extension teaches agricultural producers to adopt best management practices based on new scientific knowledge that will help them increase production, enhance sustainability, and conserve natural resources. Also, by educating the public about agriculture and food production, AgriLife Extension creates a partnership with all Texans that can improve food safety and security, reduce the prevalence of food insecurity, and improve diet and human nutrition throughout the state.

Additionally, safeguarding our precious natural resources and maintaining a clean and healthy environment are among AgriLife Extension's top priorities. We encourage production practices and the use of technologies that promote sustainability in agricultural production, conduct conservation programs that reduce drought impacts, improve, and preserve water quality, minimize wildfire risks, and help maximize water supplies through more efficient irrigation and conservation. We also help to promote the safe and reduced use of pesticides through the pesticide use training, and the integrated pest management program.

## Program Accomplishments

2020 brought many challenges for County Extension Faculty in the South Region Ag and Natural Resources program area. Agents addressed these head on and learned to use many different methods apart from our traditional face to face delivery. In some cases, were forced out of comfort zones and relied on clientele having the capability to connect with us virtually. Innovative approaches, using virtual, video, face-to-face, social media, and AgriLife Learn platforms were utilized, and often a hybrid of these to reach clientele. Varied levels of success were experienced, however agents said, "we are learning every time we try a different delivery method". They were also able to rely on tried-and-true methods of communication, including electronic and paper newsletter mail outs, and teleconference calls.

### Animal Agriculture

- **Beef Cattle Ranching** is the major livestock commodity in the South Region. South Texas cattle and range management program fit hand in glove with most programs not only addressing cattle production aspects, but also address the proper management of rangeland resources. Predominate topics included bull selection, value of replacement females, stocking rates, pasture recovery and brush control practices, forage economics, herd health practices, and marketing strategies. Contact totals for Beef Cattle was **11,129** through **406** educational events conducted in **34** counties. Interesting is the shift, due to COVID-19 restrictions, to **70%** of the total contacts were through technology assisted delivery methods. A few highlight programs are: 4-part video series of 2–3-minute instruction on utilizing (EPDs) Expected Progeny Differences that reached 1120 rural cattlemen. Multi-County Bull Gain Test and Heifer Development program an official 112-day bull gain test and heifer development program that continued for its 22nd consecutive year by adding two online educational programs discussing the data collected that reached **104** patrons. The Luling Foundation Field Day carried on with an online version reaching **124**. Bexar, Gonzales, Jim Wells, and Live Oak Counties reached **386** cattle ranchers with programs held face-to-face pre-covid.

- **Sheep and Goat Ranching** in-depth programs were offered by 3 counties reaching **1,626** producers in

the Hill Country. **410** newsletters and **2** internal parasite result demonstrations were initiated. Predator management programs that are usually well attended and a key part of sheep and goat production were canceled due to Covid restrictions.

Master Rancher - Another unique educational program under Ranching is the Master Rancher program offered in Cameron County as a 16-hour course with a variety of Extension Specialist and local experts for agencies serving as presenters. The first lesson was conducted in person at the Extension office. The subsequent lessons were moved to an online format due to the pandemic. 16 participants completed the course. All reported they expected an economic impact in their operation from participating in the course. **206** of the 687 Ag related AgriLife Learn courses completed were related to animal production.

- **Poultry** educational opportunities have grown with interest in back yard chickens and egg production. This specialty area provided for agents to connect with non-traditional audiences through Facebook live and video series. The Kendall County Agent became an unlikely Facebook Live star with his **2,890** views of the backyard chicken production. In LaSalle County the agent reached **700** online with a Facebook video series on hatching your own chickens.

- **Wildlife and Fisheries**

Wildlife education continues to be a significant portion of the Extension program efforts in the South Region. Program efforts include several multi county events as well as individual county meetings, and youth audience program series pre-covid. The 2020 program effort in wildlife education reached **11,319** total clientele. Lunch and learn virtual 1-hour programs were offered in 5 counties to reach this clientele base. One of the exciting efforts that is ongoing with planning sessions beginning in 2020 is the Bison & Exotic animal educational program. Agents in Uvalde and Upshur counties are working with Dr. Hairgrove to offer a series of program topics addressing the outlier of exotic species in Texas. Wild Pigs continue to be a significant pest in the State of Texas. The South Region is no different in that wild pig damage continues to affect every facet of agriculture production as well as residential, public and, open space properties. The Extension response in the South Region in 2020 included 5 counties working with TDA on Feral Hog Bounty programs, these consist of educational activities and verification of number of pigs taken to try and control population numbers. 10 counties in the South presented programs with wildlife related topics included on the agenda. Agriculture newsletters with a focus on wildlife management totaled **2,750**. **Master Naturalist** are 1,836 strong in the South with an outreach of 54,438 folks impacted by their educational activities. Fourteen Chapters report 122,634 hours donated for a total value for volunteer service at \$27.20 per hour of nearly **\$2.5 million**.



### **Crop and Farm Business**

In 2020, 21 counties in the South conducted educational events related to row, field, and specialty crops. 15 counties have significant Cotton, Vegetable, Grain, and Forage crop production. This program area reached **15,669** total contacts through **325** educational sessions. **3,168** newsletters focusing on Crop production were utilized as an educational method.

One highlight program was the Multi-county/district/regional soil management workshop. Agents in these counties collaborated with presenters (J. McGinty, T. Provin, & K. Lewis) to provide an educational



program that reached **30** area producers. Topics were relevant to producer operations in soil fertility management. The program was delivered virtually through the Zoom platform with the survey done through Qualtrics.

**Cotton and Grain** producers board and committee meetings were held virtual during 2020, however the multi-county pre-plant conference was held pre-covid reaching **159** producers from 4 counties. The program covering Cotton and Grain topics in preparation for planting. (83 White, 74 Hispanic and 2 other. 145 Male & 14 Female) There was a **48%** response rate with a **74%** increase in the level of understanding of the introduced topics. **99%** of respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the activity and **93%** of the respondents anticipate benefitting economically as a direct result of what they learned from the Extension activity. **100%** of the respondents said they would recommend this activity to others.

**Wheat** production interest has grown in Uvalde and Medina counties over the past few years, however a vacancy in Medina county, with this agent usually leading the program efforts left us with little attention to this area.

**Specialty Crops** is a key area of interest for many landowners in the South Region. With sub-tropical climates and fertile soils, the demand for information is high in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Citrus fruit, Nut, and Vegetable Production in a completely different climate than most of Texas requires specific expertise in this area of the state. Sunflower and Sugar Cane production are still significant program areas. Hemp production interest has ebbed with the pandemic, with agents expecting a return to interest in Industrial Hemp production to occur. Peanut production in Frio and Atascosa counties was supported by **111** Peanut Newsletters and continued Result Demonstration variety trails. Other peanut events were canceled due to COVID restrictions.

Atascosa County is known for its **Strawberry** production and Strawberry Festival. Video educational series supporting Strawberry education that reached **1,444**. Result Demonstration work with Dr. Russ Wallace has produced results that were of interest to the North American Strawberry Growers Association. This year the National Association meeting was hosted in Atascosa County with **85** growers from the United States attending.

The Winter Garden area is also home to many specialty crops including Spinach and a variety of vegetable crops. A **spinach field day** with 75 attended pre-covid was conducted in Zavala county to provide a hands-on approach to ongoing spinach projects at Tiro Tres Farms in Zavala County. The field day included speakers from spinach disease specialist, walk through a spinach outdoor nursery evaluating spinach varieties resistant to white rust disease, evaluation of various fungicides for the control of white rust in spinach and evaluation of various spinach cultivars for various traits such as disease resistance, color texture and potential yields. Watermelon demonstration trails along with Food Safety Modernization Act updates attracted **218** participants.

An impressive number of Crop newsletters were utilized as educational methods in 2020 with **18,128** informational pieces prepared, including the monthly IPM newsletter titled “Pest Cast”.

Pesticide Applicator, CEU, and Auxin trainings were offered both virtual and face-to-face. Of the 687 course completions listed below, **194** were private applicators, auxin, or IPM trainings.

### **Horticulture and Public/Ag Interface**

Horticulture continues to be in strong demand by South region clientele. The Extension response in the South Region thrives through our expert Horticulture Agents, County Extension Agents, and our vast volunteer engagement through the Master Volunteer programs. With the metropolitan areas of Travis, Bexar, Hidalgo, Cameron counties, and the I-35 corridor counties our outreach is vast. Total contacts of **327,076** in **207,849** events.

**Home Horticulture** programming addressing lawn, landscapes, backyard gardens, fruit and nut trees, vegetable gardeners in program area all CEAs can get involved in. Trees, Turf and Tomatoes knowledge

can be the base for a thriving county program reaching large audiences. Kendall Counties homeowner tomato video totaled **3,099** views to date. Under the Earth Kind program, a total of **95,154** contacts in **9,616** educational events. Community Gardens in 7 counties in the South offer outdoor classrooms and assistance to teaching clientele on how to grow their own food in the backyard. These programs reached **35,224** with **27,437** educational interactions. This year these interactions were 50% technology assisted. 5 counties utilized the online Master Gardener training platform, training 88 volunteers to the intern level. 17 counties offer Master Gardener programs in the South with over 900 volunteers to assist with educational outreach. These members contributed 72,563 volunteer hours to the horticulture educational effort. A value of \$1.4 million.

Children's Youth Garden and Texas Sprouts programs focusing on youth faced many challenges in 2020. These programs were shifted to virtual when possible, but just are not the same as having youth outdoors in the garden with their hands in the soil.

Texas Sprouts 18 1-hour lessons taught in **35** classrooms to **797** participating youth, for a total of **630** programs with **14,346** total contacts/total contact hours. The goal being youth learning to grow and eat vegetables they grow to help them avoid obesity and diabetes.

The Viticulture and Fruit Lab is located in Gillespie County. With the many vineyards and wineries being built and in grape production agents, can lean on the expertise there at the lab.

**Bexar County's Urban Garden Initiative** 14 days for the month of October which included two major plantings of some 5,000 cool weather vegetable transplants including broccoli, red and green cabbage, cauliflower, collards, two types of kale and spinach. An average of **10** Master Gardener Volunteers with about **4 Extension employees** daily. Hands on field educational training. General taking care of the plants including weeding, fertilizing and pest control as well. Reaching **672** contacts during this time. In November Extension staff and **82** Master Gardeners spent 10 days averaging 4-hour days in support of the Urban Farm growing seasonal these vegetables. For a time, value of **\$66,485**. Lunch and learn online sessions reached **3,722** technology assisted contacts.



- **Consumer Education in Food and Ag Production and Natural Resources** Ag literacy education with the target audience of new and small acreage landowners in important working with both adult and youth. Environmental stewardship, water quality, rangeland management, and other natural resources are areas of interest when working with these audiences.

Water quality and water well screening programs were difficult with the Covid restrictions to collect and run the samples. These did not happen as planned.

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AgriLife Learn: 50 Ag/NR courses with **687 course completions**

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# Family & Community Health

The goal of AgriLife Extension Family and Community Health (FCH) programs is to foster health and wellness through educational program delivery to reduce the risk of chronic disease and for the management of targeted chronic diseases. This is done through educational programs developed by subject matter experts and delivered locally by Extension agents and trained volunteers. The primary focus of FCH programs is human nutrition, active living, chronic disease prevention, food safety, mental health and wellness, and community safety.

## Program Accomplishments

In 2020, the South Region Family & Community Health program provided education through face-to-face programs, virtual classes, and social media outreach. A total of **4,888 educational events** were conducted which included planning, implementation, evaluation, and interpretation of outcomes; total contacts by agents and volunteers included **601,418**. Multiple counties in the South Region utilized Master Wellness Volunteers in programming. **25 MWVs** reported reaching **3,510 participants** through 146 FCH programs. These MWVs provided **1,132 hours of volunteer service** x \$27.20/hr. = **\$30,790.40**.

The COVID-19 restrictions greatly impacted traditional face-to-face programming. As a result, FCH, Health and BLT agents were organized into program issue teams. The teams met virtually and with assistance from Extension Specialists, they developed plans for educational outreach and program implementation virtually. Many hours were spent in trainings to better equip agents for this transition. The agent teams implemented educational programs in mental health, stress management, diabetes education, food preparation, physical activity, food safety, and children's activities. Virtual platforms utilized included: Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and multiple social media outlets. In 2020, **17,741 social media posts** in the area of Family & Community Health were made reaching **257,756 followers!** *AgriLife Learn* also provided a means for agents to reach their community. Over 56,000 FCH courses were completed. *In each of the report categories to follow, the number of courses completed is noted.*

### Human Nutrition

- **Better Living for Texans**, the SNAP-Ed education program of AgriLife Extension, reached **50,909 limited resource** individuals from 26 counties. The educational series - *Fresh Start to a Healthier You*, *Growing & Nourishing Healthy Communities*, *Be Well Live Well*, and *Walk 'n Talk* - improved individual's ability to prepare nutritious, safe meals, stretch food dollars, and increase physical activity. **1,549 adults** and **1,685 youth** graduated from a program series.

- **Adult Nutrition Programs** in the South Region reached **8,040 adults**; of these **859 individuals** from 17 counties graduated from a program series. Programs included *Dinner Tonight*, *Mobile Cooking School*, *Cooking Well Exploring Cultures*, *Cooking Well With Friends*, and *Grow It-Cook It*. These educational series provided busy families with quick, healthy, cost effective recipes and taught meal planning and food preparation skills. After participating in *Dinner Tonight*, participants confidence in meal planning to prepare healthy meals **rose from 22.1% pre-DT to 61.5% post-DT**.





- **Youth Nutrition Programs** involved **2,480 students** in two curriculum enrichment programs – *Balancing Food & Play* (250) and *Learn Grow Eat Go!* (1,892) in 16 counties. The school programs were heavily impacted by the pandemic. Many schools had planted Spring gardens but then were unable to complete the program. When it was time to plant Fall gardens, many agents adapted to Covid guidelines by creating individual container gardens for kids to grow at home and follow the lessons virtually.

- **Expanded Food and Nutrition Programs** educated **3,663** Bexar, Cameron, Hidalgo, Travis, and Willacy County limited resource **families** and **42,806 youth** on topics related to dietary quality, food resource management, food safety, and physical activity through a series of at least six lessons. At exit, 92% of adults indicated improvement in 1 or more *Diet Quality* practices, 79% indicated improvement in *Food Safety* practices, and 76% indicated improvement in *Food Resource Management* practices.




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AgriLife Learn: 5 Nutrition courses with **323 course completions**

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### Active Living

- **Walk Across Texas** events engaged **7,061 individuals** including 1,794 adults and 5,267 youth participants representing 26 counties. Over **332,490 miles** were logged by youth and adult participants. For adult participants, the lifetime estimated health care cost savings (diabetes and cardiovascular prevention/control) is **\$6,389,962**.

- **Maintain No Gain** provides motivational tools, healthy recipes, and fitness tips over a 6-week period to help participants control their weight. **216 adults** from 3 counties completed the program series.

- **Live100 Challenge**, a new online program on *Howdy Health* helps participants increase physical activity, overcome challenges, and develop strategies to stay motivated. South Region agents recruited **178 adults** from 26 counties to join the Challenge in 2020.

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AgriLife Learn: 3 Active Living courses with **15 course completions**

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### Chronic Disease Prevention

- **Diabetes Education** teaches basic nutrition and self-care management topics to help individuals with diabetes learn skills needed to manage their disease successfully. **337 adults** participated in one of the five program series including Do Well, Be Well with Diabetes (10), Cooking Well with Diabetes (287), Si Yo Puedo Controlar Mi Diabetes (7), Wisdom Power Control (13), Coping 2 Control (8) or Diabetes Your Way Conference (12). For the 30 adults completing DWBW, SYP or WPC, there is an estimated lifetime healthcare cost savings and improved productivity **economic benefit of \$943,230**.



- **Cardiovascular Health Education** teaches the risks associated with high blood pressure, the DASH eating pattern and food choices beneficial to reducing high blood pressure. **76 individuals** in 4 counties participated in either Do Well Be Well with Hypertension (8) or Cooking Well for Healthy Blood Pressure (68). For the adults completing DWBW-H, there is an estimated lifetime health care cost savings and improved productivity **economic benefit of \$149,000**.

- The **Health Talk Express** program gives agents the ability to build a program tailored to the audience's needs. Workshop topics which are available in English and Spanish include: *Cancer-Get Screened, Power to Prevent Diabetes, Cholesterol Matters, Controlling Your Blood Pressure, Be F.A.S.T. to Prevent a Stroke, Stress: Friend or Foe, Stress Less: Mind Matters, Senior Health: Be Active, Medicine Smart and Work-Life Balance*. 8 South Region counties taught the series in person but then transitioned the program to virtual delivery reaching **437 graduates** and **622 one-shot** programs.

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AgriLife Learn: 4 Chronic Disease Prevention courses with **433 course completions**

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### Food Safety

- **Food Protection Management** was developed to meet the need for quality food safety education in Texas retail food establishments. **281 individuals** in 9 counties completed the *Food Handler* certificate program, which is accredited by the Department of State Health Services and trains front-line food service workers on basic principles of food safety. The 2-day *Food Protection Management* class prepares dietary managers to successfully complete the Certified Food Management exam. There were **42 participants** in 4 counties with **88% (37/42) successfully completing** the certification exam.

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AgriLife Learn: 3 Food Safety courses with **111 course completions**

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### Community Safety

- **Child Passenger Safety** programs work to reduce deaths and injuries from motor vehicle crashes by increasing the proper use of child safety seats. In 2020, **63 safety seats** were inspected. By reducing the risk of injury and death which leads to reduced medical costs, avoidance of lost future earnings and improved quality of life, the **economic impact** is an estimated **\$83,723**.



- **Watch UR BAC** is an awareness campaign that refers to blood alcohol concentration (BAC) and teaches Texans about the dangers of alcohol and other drugs. 18 virtually delivered programs reached **1,318 individuals**, plus a Safe Driving Fair impacted **580 high school students**. The program is funded through a grant from Texas Department of Transportation.

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AgriLife Learn: 3 Community/Passenger Safety courses with **851 course completions**

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- **Early Childhood Educator Training** conferences in the South Region reached **265 educators** who care for **4,531 children** daily. A total of 757 clock hours of training were provided to professionals seeking to meet the state mandated requirements. According to evaluation data, **97.96%** (144/147) indicated the training would help them obtain the clock hours needed to *maintain employment* and **100%** (147/147) believe the training will *improve the quality of care* they provide for children in their care. Overall, there were **7,449 contacts** made in support of Early Childhood Education in 2020.

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AgriLife Learn: 110 Early Childhood Educator courses with **53,452 course completions**

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## Mental Health & Wellness

- **Mental Health First Aid** teaches participants how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The 8-hour training certificate program is taught by certified trainers. Through a Rebuild Grant, AgriLife Extension has provided the opportunity for agents to become certified MHFA instructors. In the South Region, there are 10 AgriLife and CEP agents certified as either adult or youth instructors. In the first 2.5 months, 3 classes were offered certifying **28 individuals** in Mental Health First Aid. Additionally, these agents have assisted teaching classes in the Rebuild area (outside the Region). Once we transitioned to virtual programming, *2 Mindfulness* series were conducted with **28 graduates**.

## Other Highlights

- The Hidalgo **Master Clothing Volunteer** program has been in existence for over 30 years. From 2018 – March 2020, the trained volunteers taught 302 individuals how to sew. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the MCVs transitioned their lessons to virtual delivery and **created 36 sewing tutorials** on YouTube. In 2020, the group **constructed/donated 1,010 items** needed by local hospitals including *621 face masks* for Texas Oncology.
- **Community Development** – Through a **\$300,000** CDC Working on Wellness grant, **Starr County's** WOW Coalition is addressing the need for access to fresh fruits/vegetables and providing the community with safe walking trails to increase physical activity. In response, they have created 3 Farmers Markets and planted 2 school orchards, in addition to the previously established school gardens and are working on a multi-year plan to build a Story Walk at the RGC Library and the Moving RIO Forward walkability project. The Episcopal Health Foundation granted **Bastrop County \$199,000** to develop a Community Resource Network (virtual resource center) and community engagement platform (Bastrop Connects) to strengthen connections between available resources and people who need them. **Wilson County Cares** was established in 2020 with the goal to provide meals to needy seniors. The CEA-FCH serves as a founding board member. By the end of 2020, WCC was serving an average of 450 meals per month.

## 4-H Youth Development

For over a century, AgriLife Extension has conducted youth development programs, including Texas 4-H, working in partnership with schools and youth organizations as well as with thousands of volunteers. Today, we offer hands-on learning experiences that help young people develop leadership, responsibility, and a spirit of service. Our goal is to ensure the health and well-being of our young people and to encourage them to be the leaders and motivators of tomorrow.

### 4-H Program Participation

#### South Region 4-H & Youth Development 2019-20 Enrollment

- Club Membership – 13,505
- Special Interest – 19,055
- School Enrichment – 84,437
- **TOTAL MEMBERSHIP – 116,997**
- Volunteers – 3,925
- 4-H Scholars – 51 = \$566,000

#### Top 5...

##### Projects

1 – Leadership	2,113
2 – Entomology	1,913
3 – Shooting Sports	1,910
4 – Swine	1,562
5 – Rabbits	1,560

##### Curriculum Enrichment

1 – Food & Nutrition	49,668
2 – LGEG/JMG	16,329
3 – WAT!	10,594
4 – Science of Ag	9,176
5 – Yea!4-H After School	3,730

### Program Accomplishments

#### Livestock & Agriculture

All 41 counties are involved in Agriculture Literacy education through 4-H livestock projects. This has been and remains a strong program area in the South, with agents and volunteers working through the tools of raising, caring for, and exhibiting live animals to reach **72,023**, members and families with face-to-face contacts and **16,502** technology assisted contacts. The toolbox includes beef, swine, lambs, rabbits, poultry, and meat goats. Building on project experiences, youth are better prepared to meet the challenges of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood through a coordinated, long term, progressive series of educational opportunities. Developing life skills and sound, emotional, physical, and cognitive competencies is a goal we accomplish in these project areas. **214,825** total contacts were made along with **3315** volunteers engaged while in support of the 4-H livestock program. These volunteers donated **14,272** hours and unknown in-kind support to the program. This time alone represents **\$388,198.00** of value to the livestock project area. The real value is not in the banners and trophies won, but in the leadership experiences, work ethic, and network these young people build through participating in the 4-H livestock.

4-H Youth from across the state dedicate 6 days to understanding production agriculture and what it takes to feed this country through the **Youth Agricultural Lifetime Leadership (YALL)** tour. 34 participants

learned the value of technology in livestock and crop production. Leaders in the industry shared production practices, job opportunities and the issues facing agriculture. In 2020, YALL included Texas A&M Kingsville as part of the experience. The program is sponsored by 8 industry businesses and coordinated by Bexar, Gillespie, Kerr, Mason, Medina, and ValVerde AgriLife Extension programs.

With 1% of the US workforce involved in food and fiber production, it is imperative youth understand the vital connection between agriculture and health. *Science of Ag* programming strives to teach youth how ag impacts their daily lives. **Path To The Plate Youth Expos** were held in 8 counties **reaching 4,410 youth** with the message that ag provides the essentials we need to live. Due to school closures, 4 counties were unable to conduct the PTTP programs that were planned. **Hatching in the Classroom** was conducted in 2 counties teaching **1,161 elementary students** about egg anatomy, incubation process and chick anatomy.



### Family & Community Health

The largest 4-H project is *Foods & Nutrition* as this is one project that has involvement in every county! Youth learn kitchen safety and how to prepare nutritious meals and snacks through a variety of learning experiences which focus on nutrition, food purchasing, food preparation, food safety, and related careers. During Covid restrictions, agents involved their Youth Ambassadors and Teen Leaders in developing and delivering numerous food preparation/recipe demonstration videos and FB Live sessions. **41 Healthy Texas & Healthy South Texas Youth Ambassadors** volunteered **1,605 hours** leading **458 programs**.

In the South Region, 4-H'ers compete on the County, District and State levels in Food Challenge, FCH Quiz Bowl and Food show. The curriculum enrichment projects, *Balancing Food & Play* and *Learn Grow Eat Go!* were implemented in schools in 16 counties reaching **2,480 students**.

Other FCH projects include *Fashion & Interior Design* and *Consumer Decision Making*. In the Design project, 4-H'ers learn to design, construct, and be a smart consumer when purchasing clothing and household items. Project workshops teach construction and shopping skills, and also teach personal care and grooming. 4-H members share what they have learned while competing in the Duds 2 Dazzle contest, Fashion Show and/or Storyboard contest. Closely related is the Consumer Decision Making project. Youth learn how to compare prices, test for quality, and make purchases based on facts and research. 4-H member compete on teams at the District and State CDM Contest, plus multiple statewide invitationals.

With a focus on 'county experiences', **616 4-H members** in the South Region participated in **County FCH contests** this past year. From the county experiences, many went on to District and State-level contests.

### STEM

STEM-based education teaches youth more than science and mathematics concepts. The focus on hands-on **learning** with real-world applications helps develop a variety of skill sets, including creativity and 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills. The South Region STEM projects encompass Photography, Robotics, STEM, and Digital Ambassadors.

The **Travis County CAPITAL Project** developed DIY science projects when in-person programming shifted to virtual. **10,014 youth** learned science concepts making DIY lava lamps, binoculars, and rocket launchers, in addition to STEM lessons in greenhouse, phototropism, reels and constellations.



Through the *National 4-H Council* and *Microsoft's 4-H Tech Changemaker* grant, the **Bastrop County 4-H Digital Ambassadors** purchased 5 tables and a hotspot and developed hands-on trainings for Seniors on internet safety/security, smart phone settings, online shopping, search engines, and video streaming platforms such as Facetime and Facebook. **102 seniors** were reached before programs were cancelled. The Digital Ambassadors then transitioned to *virtual delivery* and reached **483** with *online shopping safety and how to order groceries online*.

### Natural Resources

For kids who love to be outdoors, there is a project in Natural Resources they will enjoy! In the South Region, NR projects include: Entomology, Outdoor Education, Range Science, Shooting Sports, Sportfishing, Wildlife & Fisheries and Water Education. According to 4-H enrollment data, 2 of the Region's largest projects are Entomology (1,913) and Shooting Sports (1,910)! After participating in months of project workshops, youth compete in district and state contests in both projects. Districts 10 & 12 well represented on the *2019-20 Texas 4-H Shooting Sports Team* with **11 of the 35 members** hailing from the South Region!

Water Conservation and Education is taught in 4 counties by implementing annual *Water Fairs* for elementary students. In 2020, the Wilson County Youth Water Fair transitioned to a virtual format and made a huge impact. Topics such as water conservation, water run-off and pollution, wildlife and aquatic animals, and the water cycle were taught. A multi-county, multi-agency planning committee including the San Antonio River Authority was created to implement education thru online learning lessons and hands-on experiments youth could easily execute at home. **4,456 youth** in grades K-12 from **nearly all 50 US states** and **abroad** participated! Through a pre and post-test evaluation, significant results included: **167% increase** in knowledge of water availability and **44% increase** in knowledge of watersheds.

### Leadership & Citizenship

The goal of the South Region 4-H program is to grow the leaders of tomorrow! Youth develop their individual leadership skills by learning more about themselves through all project areas. But for those individuals who want to focus on their leadership development, a variety of programs and projects are available. In 2019-20, **2,113 members** participated in *leadership*-specific project work.



The 4-H Ambassador program teaches leadership, problem solving and public speaking skills. Over 2/3 of the South Region counties participate in some type of Ambassador program. County 4-H Ambassadors, Livestock & Horse Ambassadors, Healthy Texas/Healthy South Texas Youth Ambassadors, and Tech Ambassadors are the largest groups.

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### 2020 Youth Outreach

Educational Contacts = 343,119; Technology Assisted = 124,981  
5,355 Sessions; Technology Assisted = 1,673

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# Disaster Assessment & Recovery

AgriLife Extension is uniquely positioned to provide disaster assessment and recovery due to its statewide network of educators, volunteers, and offices serving all 254 Texas counties. The agency has rapidly deployed specialized professionals to disaster impact zones as a member of the Texas Emergency Management Council, continuing to support the lead state agencies during such operations. The agency has a demonstrated history of responding to the needs of Texas communities affected by floods, wildfires, tornadoes, hurricanes, and pandemics.

## Program Accomplishments

### COVID 19 Response

#### Total FTE days-1,354 and 128,881 miles in support

##### South Region DAR Agents-1,064 FTE days

Bryan Davis – 359 days

Richard Griffin – 362 days

Troy Luepke - 217

Matt Rodriguez – 126 days

##### South Region Agents/Admin – 290 FTE days

Klarissa Cantu – 6 days, COVID test kit delivery

Guadalupe Castro – 2 days, COVID test kit delivery

Travis Franke - 35 days, PPE delivery

Kyle Hammel – 8 days, PPE delivery

Jeff Hanselka – 8 days, PPE delivery

Michael Haynes – 20 days, admin & PPE delivery

Troy Luepke (as ANR agent)- 35 days, PPE delivery

Georgina Macias – 10 days, PPE delivery

Jason Mangold- 10 days, PPE delivery

Aaron McCoy – 10 days, PPE delivery

Lilian Mezquida – 6 days, COVID test kit delivery

Wayne Morse – 2 days, PPE delivery

Dale Rankin – 14 days, PPE delivery

Luis Saldana – 1 day, COVID test kit delivery

Ruben Saldana – 5 days admin support

Todd Swift – 20 days, admin & PPE delivery

Taryn Titsworth – 15 days, PPE delivery

Noel Troxclair – 10 days, support at the SOC

Caroline Weyerts – 13 days, PPE delivery

Courtney White – 10 days, PPE delivery

Sam Womble – 15 days, PPE delivery

Stephen Zoeller- 35 days, PPE delivery

#### Contact Tracing – 212 weeks total; 11 FCH/Health Agents involved

Charla Bading – 1 week

Dru Benavides – 11 weeks

Kate Blankenship – 10 weeks

Sonia Coyle – 12 weeks

Jymann Davis – 4 weeks

Nicole Demmer – 11 weeks

Marisa Dimas – 3 weeks

Jessica Faubion – 11 weeks

Angela Fiedler – 10 weeks

Molly Flores – 12 weeks

Perla Flores – 8 weeks

Corina Garcia – 1 week

Angie Gutierrez – 11 weeks

Elsie Lacey – 10 weeks

Lilian Mezquida – 11 weeks

Yolanda Morado – 6 weeks

Shea Nebgen – 11 weeks

Cosme Rubalcaba – 8 weeks

Gretchen Sanders – 6 weeks

Connie Sheppard – 1 week

Angie Sifuentes – 2 weeks

Lauren Strom – 10 weeks

Joanne Ureste – 12 weeks

June Ureste – 3 weeks

Andrea Valdez – 10 weeks

Joceline Villareal – 10 weeks

Zelina Zavala – 6 weeks

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AgriLife Learn: 10 Covid-19 related courses with **61,949 course completions**

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### South Region DAR – A Team Built to Serve

The following are brief accounts of events and activities shared by our *Disaster and Recovery Agents* who have worked tirelessly on the front lines of the COVID response efforts within AgriLife Extension.

I have been an Ag/NR agent for 20 years and have loved every bit of it. I have trained master volunteers, 4H leaders and youth and have given more educational talks than one can remember. I have had a great career with numerous accolades. However, none of these things can compare to the impact and personal satisfaction that I felt with the event I am about to describe. On Friday December 18, 2020, I was on deployment with the COVID-19 mission in San Antonio and heading home at 5:15 pm after a very long week. Unbeknownst to me, DSHS made a request of TEEX to deliver therapeutics (Bamlanivimab) at 4:45pm to two hospitals that would not have a large enough supply to make it through the weekend given their patient load. Due to the late timing of the request, it was determined that FedEx and UPS would not be viable options. The State turned to TEEX and TEEX turned to AgriLife Extension and our Pony Express team. Rachel Bauer developed a delivery plan and secured Jason Steinbacher and myself to complete the deliveries. Rachel called me at 5:30pm and asked me to reroute to Austin at the Alternate State Operations Center to pick up a therapeutic drug and deliver it to the Kerrville Hospital without delay. I changed direction and headed for Austin, picked up the package, and then rerouted to Kerrville. A medical team in Kerrville was waiting for my arrival because the need for this life-saving drug was immediate and a patient was in very critical care. As the night went on and I arrived in the city limits, I called the hospital and was directed to pull up to the Emergency entrance. I had a medical team waiting for the therapeutic drug for an elderly patient suffering from Covid-19. It was at that time I realized that AgriLife is not only about educating the public; it is about **saving lives**. I was able to make my way home that night a little before midnight safely. But that night made me realize I work with the **best of the best** in AgriLife Extension. I will never know the outcome for the patient, but I do know that when called upon in dire circumstances, we were not only prepared to respond, but we did so without any thought to the hours we had already put in that week or the late timing of the call. This is just one example of many that shows the dedication of AgriLife individuals and showcased the spirit of selfless service of the AgriLife DAR team; a team built to serve. The next morning, in the 9:00am Unified Command Meeting at the SOC, there was a shout-out to AgriLife from TDEM Command and Kirk Cole DSHS. They both thanked the AgriLife partners in helping make the hospital deliveries late into the night and stated that **"AgriLife Rocks"** ... I agree! I work with many wonderful agents that undoubtedly have similar stories to share because we understand the impact that our great organization has to offer. **-Bryan Davis**

Throughout all the early mornings, late nights, holidays, and weekend normality, the occasions that stand out most in my mind were two opportunities that we were able to provide meaningful service to the citizens of Texas. The first of these happened on July 3, 2020, around 10 pm. The DAR unit received a mass email giving the group orders with a list of hospitals that were in dire need of COVID 19 therapeutics that were to be transported over-night. I immediately contacted our TEEX counterpart from the RSA to develop a game plan for delivering the vaccine to the 12 hospitals in our region. The planning period was cut short, as we received a call from the truck driver that they had arrived at the RSA three and a half hours earlier than expected. Upon unloading the product and assessing the area of distribution, AgriLife and partner agencies were able to push out all the therapeutics to the 12 hospitals in a matter of 8 hours upon receipt of the product. Our late-night delivery, on a holiday helped ensure the end recipients of the needed therapeutic products were **delivered on time**. Those receiving the deliveries on site were **most appreciative** of our work.

We had another opportunity to take part in a late afternoon call that we received from the SOC, asking for assistance in delivering lifesaving ventilators to a pop-up hospital in McAllen. At 2:00 pm Matt Rodriguez and I were notified our assistance was needed to pony express the ventilator equipment from the mid-way point to the hospital that was located at a Chamber of Commerce facility. Without batting an eye, my coworker grabbed the keys to the 28' box truck and we were on our way to meet a co-worker in Live Oak County. The 8-hour round trip made for a late night, but to see the **look of relief** and hear the words of **appreciation** from the individuals at the facility made the trip well worth it. It has truly been an honor to assist the citizens of Texas. I have had many 1st opportunities this year; from delivering PPE to nursing homes & schools, transporting Covid 19 samples across the state, assisting in administering testing at the State Capitol, to working at a FEMA mass vaccination center. These are opportunities, experiences, and memories that our department can cherish and build upon moving forward. **-Richard Griffin**

# Healthy South Texas

As the pilot program of Healthy Texas, HST focuses on reducing the highest impact diseases and their consequences in the 27 southernmost counties of the state. HST launched in September 2015. The HST counties account for about 10% of the state's population, much of which is underserved and under-resourced. The general population here outnumbers physicians 1,000 to 1, and five of these counties have no physician at all.

HST in the South Region includes 13 counties: **Brooks, Cameron, Duval, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Kleberg/Kenedy, Live Oak, Starr, Webb, Willacy, and Zapata**. AgriLife Extension, working through local coalitions of volunteers and program collaborators, partners Extension Agents with subject-matter specialists to develop and deliver educational programs, events, and activities.

In FY2020, programming focused on ***Building a Culture of Health*** by increasing fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity in schools, workplaces, and communities.

## Program Accomplishments

### FY2020 Program Goals for District 12

#### *Visibility*

Dinner Tonight or Choose Your Way Diabetes Conference in each county – 1,000 participants

#### *Culture of Health*

Worksite Wellness, Healthy School or Community Program – 1,400 adult graduates

#### *HST Designated School*

Youth Physical Activity and Nutrition Programs – 3,800 youth graduates

• **Healthy South Texas Adult** programs included *Dinner Tonight*, *Choose Your Way Diabetes Conference*, *On The Road to Healthy Living Mobile Cooking School*, *Maintain No Gain*, *Cooking Well With Diabetes*, *Health Talk Express*, and *Cooking Well for Healthy Blood Pressure*. During FY20, **1,569 adults** graduated from one of these program series which taught nutrition, ways to incorporate more fruits/vegetables in the diet, food safety, food preparation skills and promoted increasing physical activity. The programs which were implemented in all 13 D12 HST counties involved Master Wellness Volunteers, HST Youth Ambassadors and HST Coalition members. **Walk Across Texas!** Is the physical activity program designated by the Texas Department of State Health Services as a Best Practice Physical Activity Program for both *Adults* and *Youth*. WAT! was implemented in all 13 counties in partnership with school districts, county governments, businesses, cities, and colleges/universities including Texas A&M University-Kingsville and Texas A&M International University. **1,299 adults** registered for WAT! Due to Covid-19 closures, many were not able to complete the 8-week program. 781 adults wrapped up with **146,144 miles**. For those adults, the lifetime estimated health care cost savings (diabetes and cardiovascular prevention & control) is **\$2,741,702**.

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Adult Goal: 1,000 + 1,400 = 2,400  
**FY20 Adult Participants/Graduates = 2,868**

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• **Healthy South Texas Youth** programs involved multiple *Teacher In-Service trainings* in the summer of 2019 which launched *Learn Grow Eat Go!*, *Dinner Tonight Jr*, *Path to the Plate Youth Expos*, and *Choose Food, Fun & Fitness!* In partnership with numerous School Districts and After-School Programs, these nutrition programs reached 7,622 students. Additionally, 3,845 youth walked 140,625 miles in school WAT! programs. A total of **13,129 youth** were involved in *Healthy South Texas!* These were amazing results considering numerous programs were cancelled when schools closed due to Covid-19.

Youth Goal: 3,800

**FY20 Youth Participants/Graduates = 13,129**

• **HST Recognized School** program recognizes a school's commitment to supporting and encouraging students, staff and parents with healthy lifestyles thus creating a *culture of health* in that community. Schools must participate in a school-wide Walk Across Texas for youth and adults, at least one youth nutrition/health program in 2 classrooms and one or more adult nutrition/health programs for staff and parents. In 2020, **30 schools** in the South Region received this *distinguished recognition*. They were from *Duval County* – 3 schools, *Jim Hogg County* – 3 schools (all campuses in the county), *Jim Wells County* – 1 school, *Kleberg/Kenedy Counties* – 3 schools, *Starr County* – 5 schools, *Webb County* – 7 schools, *Willacy County* – 2 schools, and *Zapata County* – 6 schools (all campuses in the county).

• **Healthy South Texas Youth Ambassadors** are youth 'health experts' who motivate others to make changes in their lifestyle and improve their overall health. **32 HSTYAs** volunteered **748 hours** assisting with educational programs, food demonstrations, and health fairs after participating in the statewide virtual HT/HST Youth Ambassador Summit. When the world shut down in March, the HSTYAs really stepped up to deliver healthy educational messages on multiple social media platforms! Some videos included: Stop the Spread of Covid-19, How to Start a Garden, Stay Active During Stay @ Home, Purchasing & Stretching Food During Covid-19 and multiple recipes & physical activity demonstrations.



**HEALTHY SOUTH TEXAS**





## About the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

*Extending Knowledge. Providing Solutions.*

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service works daily to make Texas better by providing innovative solutions at the intersection of agriculture, natural resources, youth, and health thereby improving the wellbeing of individuals, families, businesses, and communities through education and service. With a statewide network that includes 252 county offices, extension educators and their more than 93,000 volunteers serve all 254 Texas counties, making some 25 million teaching contacts a year. The programs, tools and resources provided by AgriLife Extension teach people how to improve agriculture and food production, advance health practices, protect the environment, strengthen our communities, and enrich youth. Our Texas 4-H Youth Development Program engages nearly 600,000 youth annually. Extension education provides a unique force for the betterment of Texas.

Learn more at [AgriLifeExtension.tamu.edu](https://AgriLifeExtension.tamu.edu) or follow us on Twitter at [@txextension](https://twitter.com/txextension).